

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A watercraft comprising a hull, an engine supported by the hull, a jet propulsion unit driven by the engine, the jet propulsion unit comprising a steering nozzle configured to direct a jet of water exiting the jet propulsion unit, a water diverter bucket disposed near the steering nozzle and movable between an opened position, a partially opened position, and a closed position at which the water diverter bucket at least partially redirects the jet of water, a control assembly coupled to the water diverter bucket to move the water diverter bucket between the opened, partially opened, and closed positions, the control assembly including an actuator, an operation cable and a switch, the cable having a first end and a second end, the first end being coupled to the actuator and the second end being coupled to the water diverter bucket such that movement of the actuator moves the first end of the operation cable, which in turn moves the second end of the operation cable thereby moving the water diverter bucket assembly toward one of the opened, partially opened, and closed positions, the switch being arranged to detect whether the water diverter bucket is in the partially opened position and communicating with the engine such that the engine is allowed to start only when the water diverter bucket is in the partially opened position.

2. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the water diverter bucket includes at least first and second openings that are arranged to produce simultaneous thrust in generally opposite directions such that the watercraft remains generally stationary.

3. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the switch is a micro-switch.

4. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the steering nozzle defines at least two effluent openings and the water diverter bucket is arranged to close one of the effluent openings when in the closed position.

5. A watercraft comprising a hull, an engine being supported by the hull and including at least one throttle, a jet propulsion unit driven by the engine, the jet propulsion unit comprising a steering nozzle configured to direct a jet of water exiting the jet propulsion unit, a throttle actuator mechanism coupled with the throttle, and a control lever cooperating with the throttle actuator mechanism, the control lever being selectively positioned in at least first and second positions, the first position of the control lever being arranged such that the throttle actuator mechanism rests in a first position and the second position of the control lever being arranged such that the throttle actuator mechanism rests in a second position, the throttle having a first position when the throttle actuator

mechanism rests in its first position and having a second position when the throttle actuator mechanism rests in the second position, wherein the second throttle position provides a larger opening degree than the first throttle position.

6. The watercraft of Claim 5, wherein the engine sufficiently powers the jet propulsion unit when the throttle rests in its second position to assist steering of the watercraft when decelerating from at least a planing speed.

7. The watercraft of Claim 5 additionally comprising an operational control device housing supporting the control lever.

8. The watercraft of Claim 7, wherein the housing defines a slot having first and second ends, the control lever is arranged so as to slide within the slot, and a biasing mechanism biases the control lever toward the second end of the slot.

9. The watercraft of Claim 8, wherein the housing defines a locking recess that defines the second position of the control lever.

10. The watercraft of Claim 8, wherein the throttle actuator mechanism includes a biasing mechanism that biases the throttle actuator mechanism toward its first resting position, and the force of the biasing mechanism operating on the throttle lever is greater than the force of the biasing mechanism operating on the control lever.

11. The watercraft of Claim 7, wherein the housing is disposed next to at least a portion of the throttle actuator mechanism.

12. The watercraft of Claim 5, wherein the throttle actuator mechanism comprises a throttle lever disposed remotely from the engine and a throttle actuation mechanism directly connected to the throttle.

13. The watercraft of Claim 12, wherein the throttle actuator mechanism addition comprises a control cable extending between the throttle lever and the throttle actuation mechanism.

14. The watercraft of Claim 12, wherein the throttle actuation mechanism includes an electric motor.

15. A method of controlling an engine speed of a marine engine that powers a propulsion unit of a watercraft, the method comprising selecting between a first throttle resting position and a second throttle resting position depending upon a desired operational mode of the watercraft, the second throttle resting position causing the engine to power the propulsion unit by an amount sufficient to assist steering of the watercraft when decelerating from at least a planing speed.

16. The method of Claim 15, wherein the selection of the engine speed is controlled manually.

17. The method of Claim 15, wherein the selection of the engine speed is controlled automatically.

18. A method of controlling an engine of a watercraft, the watercraft including a jet propulsion unit and a water diverter bucket disposed behind the jet propulsion unit, the method comprising determining whether the diverter bucket lies in a partially opened position and preventing the engine from being started if the diverter bucket is not in the partially opened position.

19. A watercraft comprising a hull, an engine supported by the hull, the engine comprising a throttle, a means for selecting between at least a first and second resting positions for the throttle, the second resting position providing a larger opening degree than the first throttle position, and a throttle actuator mechanism coupled to the throttle to move the throttle from either the first or second resting positions toward a wide open position.

20. The watercraft of Claim 19, wherein said means is disposed next to at least a portion of the throttle actuator mechanism.

21. The watercraft of Claim 19, wherein said means additionally lowers engine speed during a shifting operation.